

The



Torch

February 20, 2009

A bi-weekly report from the Coalition of Higher Education Assistance Organizations

Table of Contents

COHEAO News

1. [Save the Date! COHEAO Mid-Year Conference in Philadelphia, PA; Volunteers Needed](#)
Save the Date for the COHEAO Mid-Year Conference August 1 through August 4. This year's Mid-Year conference will take place in historic Philadelphia, PA.
2. [Scholarships: Open For Applications](#)
Once again, the Silent Auction at the Annual Conference was a great success raising over \$3,800 for the COHEAO Scholarships to needy students.
3. [Register Today for the COHEAO Teleconference on Complying With "Red Flag" Rules](#)
COHEAO will be holding a teleconference that will feature speakers from universities that have implemented programs to comply with the Federal Trade Commission's Red Flag Rules for spotting potential identity theft.
4. [Distribution Policy for *The Torch*](#)
COHEAO would like to remind all of our members, to please abide by the distribution policy for *The Torch*.
5. [Get Your Winter Fashions at the COHEAO Store](#)
It is Winter and that means it's time to update your wardrobe with the latest from the COHEAO store.

Congress

1. [Congress Passes \(and President Signs\) Economic Stimulus Package, No FCC Included](#)
Last Friday, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, H.R. 1, the economic stimulus bill, and President Barack Obama signed the legislation in Denver this week.
2. [Gregg Withdraws from Commerce Consideration](#)
Yesterday, a week after he first accepted the job, Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) withdrew his name from consideration for Commerce Secretary.

Inside Ed and the Administration

1. [Duncan Hails Passage of Stimulus Package and Announces Website Resources](#)
On Wednesday, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan hailed the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).
2. [Higher Education Opportunity Act Neg Reg Begins](#)

- Negotiated rulemaking on the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) began this week with Team IV gathering in Washington to discuss issues impacting discretionary grants.
3. [President Obama to Begin Outlining Budget Next Week](#)
Details on how President Obama will change the national discussion from addressing the economic crisis with spending to how to pay for that spending emerged yesterday.
 4. [Secretary Duncan Addresses ACE Conference](#)
Last week, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan delivered remarks at the American Council on Education's (ACE) annual meeting.

Industry News

1. [Higher Ed Groups Question Elimination of FSA's Experimental Sites Initiative](#)
Several higher education groups are concerned with a last minute decision of the Bush Administration to eliminate Federal Student Aid's "Experimental Sites Initiative."
2. [State FAA Groups Begin Writing Congress on PLUS Auction](#)
Following in the footsteps of NASFAA, several state financial aid administrator associations have begun writing their Congressional delegations to urge the repeal of the PLUS auction.
3. [PA Considers Video Poker to Fund Student Aid](#)
Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell (D) recently announced two initiatives aimed at easing the burden of college costs for state residents
4. [Moran Named Director of Federal Relations for AASCU](#)
The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) named Robert Moran as their new director of federal relations.
5. [Conference on Technology & Standards Set for April 6-7, 2009](#)
The 6th Annual Conference on Technology & Standards in Higher Education will be held April 6 - 7, 2009 in Washington, D.C.

Attachments

1. [Board of Directors](#)
2. [COHEAO Commercial Members](#)
3. [Scholarship Poster](#)

COHEAO News

Save the Date! COHEAO Mid-Year Conference in Philadelphia, PA

Save the Date for the COHEAO Mid-Year Conference August 1 through August 4. This year's Mid-Year conference will take place in historic Philadelphia, PA. The conference will feature important legislative and regulatory updates. The conference will be located in downtown Philadelphia and is ideally located next to many of the city's most visited attractions, including city hall, the art museum, Reading Terminal Market, Penn's Landing and Citizen's Bank Park, home of the Philadelphia Phillies! Registration will be available shortly on the COHEAO website.

COHEAO is also looking for any individuals who are interested in serving on the Conference Agenda Committee. Those interested should immediately contact Larry Rock at Concordia College at lrock@concordia.edu.

As more information becomes available it will be posted on the COHEAO website.

Scholarships: Open For Applications

COHEAO is accepting applications for the 2009-2010 scholarships. Scholarships are awarded to undergraduate students who attend COHEAO member institutions. This year, four \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded to deserving students. The Board of Directors voted unanimously to award one scholarship this year in honor of COHEAO member Marty Damien of Massachusetts, who passed away in January.

Scholarship recipients are chosen by the Scholarship Selection Committee made up of representatives from COHEAO member schools and institutions. The application deadline for the 2009-2010 scholarships is March 21, 2009. A flyer suitable for printing and posting is attached to the Torch.

In recent years, the funds raised for the COHEAO scholarship have helped students at UC Berkeley, Gonzaga University, Northern Arizona University, UCLA, Iowa State University, Yale University and many others.

Register Today for the COHEAO Teleconference on Complying With "Red Flag" Rules

COHEAO will be holding a teleconference that will feature speakers from universities that have implemented programs to comply with the Federal Trade Commission's Red Flag Rules for spotting potential identity theft.

The teleconference will take place from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, February 26th. Three university representatives and a major billing servicer have already

agreed to speak, and questions will be encouraged. Henry Saas from Xavier University, Jennifer Vinson from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and Marsha Lovell from UCLA will present information about how they are implementing the red flag procedures as their schools. Registration is available on the COHEAO website at www.coheao.org

Distribution Policy for *The Torch*

COHEAO would like to remind all of our members, to please abide by the distribution policy for *The Torch*. Redistribution of this memorandum or its content outside the immediate organization of the intended recipient without the express prior permission of COHEAO is prohibited.

If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact Krista Heckler or Harrison Wadsworth.

Get Your Winter Fashions at the COHEAO Store

It's winter and that means it's time to update your wardrobe with the latest from the COHEAO store, <http://www.westernprinting.net/coheao>, where you will find high-quality clothing and outerwear bearing the distinctive COHEAO flame logo. The net proceeds from the sale of the clothing will go to the COHEAO scholarship fund, which awards \$1,000 scholarships every year to deserving students with financial need who are attending COHEAO member institutions of higher education. Check it out today and help yourself – and a student who can really use the assistance.

Congress

Congress Passes (and President Signs) Economic Stimulus Package, No FCC Included

Last Friday, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, H.R. 1, the economic stimulus bill, and President Barack Obama signed the legislation in Denver this week. In the House, it passed by a margin of 246-183-1. In the Senate, it passed 60-38, with Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) returning from his mother's wake late in the evening to cast the 60th vote.

The debate on final passage was contentious and highly partisan. In the House, the bill passed without a single Republican supporting the measure, and seven Democrats voting against it. In the Senate, Sens. Susan Collins (ME), Olympia Snowe (ME) and Arlen Specter (PA) were the only Republicans who were expected to vote in favor, with all Democrats also supporting it. Sen. Edward Kennedy, who is ailing, was not expected to be able to vote.

With a price tag totaling \$790 billion in tax cuts and spending, it is a bill designed to stimulate the economy by doing the following: creating new jobs through investing in the nation's infrastructure; providing a lifeline to families that have been crushed by the economic downturn; and providing emergency funds to states to prevent teacher layoffs, make college more affordable, modernize schools and support other high priority services.

Both the House and Senate versions of this bill each dedicated a large amount of funding for student aid programs, but the \$61 million Federal Capital Contribution (FCC) for Perkins Loans did not make it in to the final Conference report. The final legislation does include \$17.1 billion for Pell Grants, \$13.7 billion for the American Opportunity Tax Credit (a 40% refundable tax credit to temporarily replace the Hope tax credit—this tax credit is based off of the signature college affordability proposal of the Obama campaign), and \$200 million in addition Federal Work Study funding.

Conference negotiations took place throughout the week, and, essentially, a multi-billion dollar game of chicken unfolded between the Obama Administration, the Democratic leadership in the House and Senate and the moderate Senators who wanted to support the bill, but objected to some of the spending. Claiming the price tag was too high and too many of the investments would not stimulate economic recovery, Sens. Collins, Specter and Snowe joined forces with Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NE), a conservative Democrat, to persuade their colleagues to reduce the funding by over \$100 billion.

While the compromise enraged many House Members who thought the price was too great to get minimal Republican support, the endorsement of Snowe, Specter, and Collins was critical to overcoming the 60 vote hurdle required to bring the stimulus package to the Floor for final consideration. The Senate negotiations continued right up to today's deadline for passage that had been established earlier by the President and the Congressional Leadership.

For more information on the Conference report, visit:
http://www.rules.house.gov/bills_details.aspx?NewsID=4149

Gregg Withdraws from Commerce Consideration

Last Thursday, a week after he first accepted the job, Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) withdrew his name from consideration for Commerce Secretary. The Senate Budget Committee Ranking Member cited "irresolvable conflicts" between his personal views and the Administration's policies on certain issues, particularly the stimulus package and the Census, in announcing his decision.

Gregg plans to continue his work in the Senate and on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. In a deal worked out with New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch (D) he was originally set to be replaced by fellow Republican Bonnie Newman, his former Chief of Staff from his days in the House of Representatives.

Gregg was the second Commerce Secretary-designate in the Obama Administration. New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson was the initial pick, but his involvement in a corruption investigation required his withdrawal. In announcing his decision, Gregg mentioned his declining of the offer was not the result of an issue arising from the vetting process.

To read Sen. Gregg's full statement, visit:http://gregg.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressRoom.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=6c5fa06b-802a-23ad-4f98-65d74c049a47

INSIDE ED AND THE ADMINISTRATION

Duncan Hails Passage of Stimulus Package and Announces Website Resources

On Wednesday, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan hailed the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) calling it a "historic opportunity to create jobs and advance education reform." He credited the "leadership of the President and the Congress in laying groundwork for a generation of education reform and economic opportunity."

The Department announced an ARRA Web site where additional information on the act will be posted as it becomes available. Currently, it offers the press release, a more detailed fact sheet, and links to budget information, including state-by-state allocations for formula-based programs, as well as a brief video statement from Secretary Duncan.

Additionally, www.recovery.gov is now live. The mission of this site is three-fold: education (explain the ARRA), transparency (show how, when, and where ARRA money is spent), and accountability (furnish data that will allow citizens to evaluate the act's progress and provide feedback).

To view the Department's ARRA site, visit:
<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/index.html>

Higher Education Opportunity Act Neg Reg Begins

Negotiated rulemaking on the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) began this week with Team IV gathering in Washington to discuss issues impacting discretionary grants. The two teams addressing student loan issues, Team I and Team II, begin their negotiating sessions next week. Team I, General Lender/Loan Issues, is scheduled for February 23-25, and Team II, School-Based Loan Issues, follows directly behind with negotiations starting at 1 p.m. EST on February 25.

The Department of Education also formally announced all negotiators. On Team II, Jackie Ito-Woo of the University of California will serve as the primary negotiator for the Perkins Loan “constituency,” and Beth Stack of the University of Pittsburgh will serve as the alternate. Ito-Woo is the Legislative Co-Chair, Regulatory, on the COHEAO Board of Directors.

Gail McLarnon will be serving as the negotiator for Team II. Team II negotiators will address issues relating to Perkins Loans, including the mandatory assignment of loans to the Department, death and disability issues, and the new and expanded public service and military loan cancellations. The Team will also address cohort default rate calculations, entrance and exit counseling, student lending codes of conduct, preferred lender lists, private loan certification, school (and affiliated organization) disclosure and reporting requirements.

Much of the initial session is devoted to establishing ground rules and setting the agenda for the negotiations moving forward. The second sessions are scheduled for the first week of April, and the third, and supposedly final, set of negotiations will take place in early May.

As always, the Department’s schedule is tentative. The individual negotiators are listed with each team’s schedule, which are posted under the heading “Negotiated Rulemaking” on the Department’s dedicated webpage for HEOA. To view the HEOA page, visit: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html#neg-reg>

COHEAO is closely following the negotiations, with either Krista Heckler or Harrison Wadsworth attending and taking notes at all Team II sessions. In addition, the Perkins Task Force, chaired by Jennifer Vinson of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and the Board of Directors are advising the Perkins negotiators. For more information, contact Krista at kheckler@wpllc.net.

President Obama to Begin Outlining Budget Next Week

Details on how President Obama will change the national discussion from addressing the economic crisis with spending to how to pay for that spending emerged yesterday. Next week will be a “budget week” that will include a “summit on economic responsibility” at the White House, a speech on Tuesday before a joint session of Congress, and release on Thursday of a general outline of the budget

Press reports indicate the budget documents released next week will have little or no details relating to changes to specific programs. Instead the document is described by the *Washington Post* as follows:

A budget outline: a framework that establishes the president’s spending priorities and offers broad funding levels for each of the federal agencies. The document will also forecast how much the president expects the government to spend during

each of the next 10 years, how much he expects the Treasury to collect in tax revenue and how big a gap he anticipates between expenditures and revenues.

The full budget is likely to be released during the third week of March rather than in April as had been previously reported. When released, the document will be published on www.omb.gov and, most likely, a summary of the provisions relating to the Department of Education will be found at www.ed.gov.

To view the *Washington Post* article, visit: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/19/AR2009021903021.html>

Secretary Duncan Addresses ACE Conference

Last week, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan delivered remarks at the American Council on Education's (ACE) annual meeting. In his remarks the Secretary discussed some of his long term goals and the pending economic stimulus package.

Duncan used his address to support the education funding levels of the House version of the stimulus bill, which were greater than the Senate version. Referencing a study from the University of Washington stating 600,000 education jobs could be at stake without the stimulus package, the Secretary said, "This is not just good education policy. It's good economic policy."

After discussing the stimulus legislation, Duncan warned of the many challenges that lie ahead for the entire P-16 education system. While he said there are many urgent problems in education, such as varying high school standards, Duncan also said he was extending his hand "in partnership" with the higher education community and struck a hopeful tone with his message.

"Taken together—the Barack effect—the leadership on the Hill—the proven strategies—and the money in the stimulus package—represent what I call—the perfect storm for reform—a historic alignment of interests and events that could lift American education to an entirely new level," said Duncan.

While Duncan received an incredibly warm reception from the attendees at the ACE Conference, he did gently chide the higher education community on certain issues, such as graduation rates and the "blame game" that is played across the different levels of education (postsecondary vs. secondary, secondary vs. primary, etc.). Stating "we are all defined by their successes," the Secretary said that college access is only one part of the equation, and policymakers and the higher education community must work together to ensure higher rates of degree or program completion.

Duncan also discussed financial aid and affordability. He mentioned simplifying the aid process, and making sure that college remains affordable "in good economic times and bad ones." He also made a passing reference to the success of the ECASLA programs,

stating, “We need to ensure that federal loans continue to be available to every student and parent that qualifies.”

To view the Secretary’s full remarks, visit:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2009/02/02092009.html>

INDUSTRY NEWS

Higher Ed Groups Question Elimination of FSA’s Experimental Sites Initiative

Several higher education groups are concerned with a last minute decision of the Bush Administration to eliminate Federal Student Aid’s “Experimental Sites Initiative.” According to FSA’s webpage on the program, “Schools that participate as experimental sites can test different ways to meet program requirements, and FSA can incorporate these school experiences in regulatory and legislative proposals that will enhance program integrity and reduce administrative burden.”

On December 23, then Deputy Assistant Secretary Vince Sampson informed schools of the decision to end the program in June, stating the program had not been successful in developing wide scale reforms. However, financial aid officials participating in the program said it has led to innovations in student aid that have benefitted both students and schools, and NASFAA recently wrote to the Department of Education calling the decision “ill-conceived.”

In addition to NASFAA, a growing number of higher education associations, including ACE and COHEAO, have indicated their support for continuing this program, and are hopeful the new political leadership at the Department will allow it to continue. The new Administration has yet to comment on its plans for the initiative.

For more information on the Experimental Sites Initiative, visit:

<https://experimentalsites.ed.gov/exp/index.html>

State FAA Groups Begin Writing Congress on PLUS Auction

Following in the footsteps of NASFAA, several state financial aid administrator associations have begun writing their Congressional delegations to urge the repeal of the PLUS auction. Included in the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, the PLUS auction is supposed to be in place for the 2009-2010 academic year, but school officials have warned the auction process will “greatly disadvantage” students and schools.

Several of the financial aid community’s concerns with the PLUS auction, as identified by a letter from the Kentucky Association of Student Financial Administrators, are listed below:

- *The auction process will not be completed for 2009-2010 until mid or late summer. Aid professionals encourage early application and planning, and most parents have already begun to explore their options to pay for their student's education. Parents will not be able to complete an application or have a lender choice until a few weeks prior to the beginning of the fall term. If a parent applies with a lender before the auction and that lender is not one of the approved lenders, the parent will be required to reapply with an additional credit check.*
- *Under the PLUS auction legislation, a parent will be required to borrow from the lender approved for the state in which his/her child is attending school, not the state in which the parent lives. Many parents take out loans for multiple children, who may go to schools in different states. These parents may then have multiple lenders and servicers adding to confusion and burden in repayment.*
- *Many parent borrowers have a banking relationship and would prefer to do business with their bank.*
- *A parent borrower may have a PLUS loan with one lender and the student may have a loan with a different lender, adding to confusion in repayment.*
- *Financial Aid Offices may not be able to efficiently process a large number of applications received in late summer in a timely manner, causing a delay in students receiving funds for the fall term.*
- *Schools may not be able to quickly change business processes if the lenders chosen through the auction have different methods for certification and transmission of loans. Again, this could cause major delays if bids are awarded in late summer.*

PA Considers Video Poker to Fund Student Aid

Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell (D) recently announced two initiatives aimed at easing the burden of college costs for state residents: 1) A \$35 million increase in funding for PHEAA grants 2) the creation of a Tuition Relief Act, a program designed for families with students attending state-owned two and four year schools earning up to \$100,000.

In order to pay for the program, Rendell is proposing the legalization (and taxation) of video poker machines throughout the Keystone State. The Governor released his proposal last week, and issued a press release calling on the Pennsylvania General Assembly to take action.

There has been some pushback in the General Assembly on relying on proceeds from gambling to fund state initiatives, but the main concern appears to be what schools are not covered by the Tuition Relief Act. In Pennsylvania, several institutions are considered "state-related" institutions, as opposed to state-owned, and they are not covered by Rendell's proposal.

Several of Pennsylvania's largest and most popular schools, such as Penn State, Temple, and the University of Pittsburgh, are classified as "state-related," meaning they receive

public funding, but also retain a certain degree of autonomy from Harrisburg. Rendell has said he's open to including these schools, but also mentioned his trepidations with the state's lack of control.

"If the legislature wants to include them, and has a viable way for doing it, we'll talk," said Rendell.

Moran Named Director of Federal Relations for AASCU

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) named Robert Moran as their new director of federal relations.

Moran comes to AASCU from the Department of Education where he worked in the office of the Under Secretary managing the development of various Administration policies. Moran's most recent focus was in the area of Title IV programs, which included all of the newly implemented and announced lending programs, the lender-of-last-resort (especially as it relates to federal advances), the Administration's regulations around inducements, and simplification of the federal aid system.

Moran will be responsible for coordinating and advocating AASCU's federal policy positions with Congress, the Obama Administration, federal agencies and other higher education organizations. His advocacy priorities will also include issues related to federal student financial aid, teacher education and veteran education

Conference on Technology & Standards Set for April 6-7, 2009

The 6th Annual Conference on Technology & Standards in Higher Education will be held April 6 - 7, 2009 in Washington, D.C. The event is sponsored by the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC) in partnership with the National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs (NCHELP) and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO).

This year, Pre-Conference Concurrent Workshops will be held on Sunday April 5, 2009, prior to the conference. PESC's Spring 2009 Summit will then follow the conference from April 7-8, 2009.

This event signifies an effort by NCHELP, PESC, and SHEEO to focus on technological issues important to their respective memberships under one efficient venue. This conference also includes the support and participation of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) and the Schools Interoperability Framework Association (SIFA).

For more information, visit: http://www.pesc.org/interior.php?page_id=191

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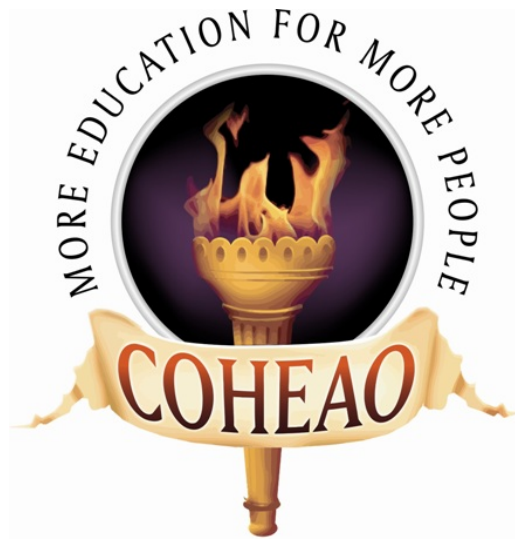
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COHEAO Scholarship

2009-2010



For the 2009 – 2010 academic school year, the Coalition of Higher Education Assistance Organizations (COHEAO) will award four \$2,000 scholarships.

The eligibility requirements for applicants for the 2009-2010 academic year are as follows:

- Applicants must be U.S. citizens;
- Applicants must attend a COHEAO Member School;
- Applicants must have a minimum GPA of 3.75 on a 4.0 scale;
- Only undergraduate students, who will be entering their sophomore, junior, or senior year in 2009-2010, are eligible to apply: freshmen and graduate students are not eligible;
- Only one scholarship per family per academic year will be awarded; and
- COHEAO members and their immediate family members are not eligible for COHEAO scholarships.

Further information about the COHEAO scholarship is available via the Web at: <http://www.coheao.org/scholarship/scholarship.html>

The application deadline is March 21th, 2009